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Advances in functional assemblies for regenerative medicine

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Advances in functional assemblies for regenerative medicine

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45 **Key words**

46
47 Tissue engineering; drug delivery; nanotechnology; assembly; supramolecular; functional materials

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1. Introduction

1 The ability to produce functional assemblies of molecules and control their physical and chemical
2 properties in the solution/solid state has found significant applications in biomedical engineering.
3 In particular, the design and fabrication of novel biomaterials, via supramolecular chemistry
4 approaches,^[1] and innovative nano/micro fabrication strategies has facilitated the design of
5 biocompatible materials with highly desirable properties.
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11 Materials in which the specific intra-/inter-molecular interactions of their components drive their
12 assembly into hierarchical (and potentially functional) assemblies abound in nature (e.g. catalytic
13 enzymes or mechanically strong structural proteins such as mussel byssus or silks), and offer
14 inspiration for the supramolecular engineering of materials properties. Polymers incorporating
15 such supramolecular organization are an emerging class of novel materials because they integrate
16 the physicochemical (and in certain cases mechanical) properties present in conventional
17 polymeric materials with dynamic reversibility originating from the reversibility of the intra-/inter-
18 molecular interactions at specific length scales. Consequently, the parameters that traditionally
19 determine the properties of a polymer, such as chain length, crosslinking, chain dynamics, and
20 chain conformation, can be reversibly adjusted in situ, leading to the development of stimuli
21 responsive biomaterials or selectively active biochemistries. The ability to synthesise
22 bioresponsive systems using polymer-based materials with supramolecular features has led to a
23 surge in research interest directed towards their development as next generation biomaterials for
24 drug delivery, medical device design and tissue engineering.
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39 Concurrently, the industrial model for fabrication of materials is undergoing a revolution
40 facilitated through the development of advanced formulation processes and methodologies. In
41 particular, significant advances in regenerative scaffold formation (i.e. as an artificial extracellular
42 matrix) are emerging from the fields of additive manufacturing, bioprinting and nanolithographic
43 fabrication. These approaches have synergistically facilitated the development of biomaterials by
44 enabling biomimicry on novel length scales which may enhance their physicochemical
45 properties^[2]. Current processing techniques allow the generation of materials with micron to
46 nanoscale architecture/topography, and offer the potential to pattern bioactive molecules with
47 high spatial resolution. Encouragingly, the combination of next-generation methodologies with
48 medical imaging techniques is helping to drive a personalised medicine approach towards
49 biomaterial design.
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51 Here we review recent advances in functional assemblies for biomedical applications, with an
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1 emphasis on novel approaches in the design of self-assembled, biomimetic and bioresponsive
2 biomaterials for drug delivery and tissue regeneration. Advances in the use of DNA as a structural
3 material for bioengineering are presented. Moreover, the controlled self-assembly of peptides,
4 proteins and polysaccharides into intrinsically biocompatible soft materials is discussed in terms of
5 their supramolecular design and different applications. We further review the use of
6 supramolecular assemblies of polymers (biopolymers and shape memory polymers) for
7 regenerative medicine applications. Finally, we discuss the prospects for using 2D and 3D printing
8 technologies to fabricate biocompatible substrates and scaffolds.

14 **2 DNA assemblies**

17 Polynucleic acids such as DNA/RNA can self-assemble with high fidelity rendering them a powerful
18 template for the organization and deposition of unique chemistries in high resolution at the
19 nanometre scale. Although pristine DNA chemistries can be assembled with very high order, an
20 area of research is emerging which focuses on supramolecular DNA assembly and exploiting DNA
21 interactions to create highly-ordered chemical arrays. Specifically, DNA building blocks can be
22 coupled with synthetic chemistries, polymers and nanostructures. Thus the approaches of
23 supramolecular chemistry are augmented through the predictable and modular nature of DNA
24 interactions.

27 The chemical composition of DNA along with its highly specific base pairing rules endow it with a
28 unique programmability inspired by the genetic code of life. The notion that DNA could be
29 programmed to assume new structural motifs was first articulated by Seeman in 1982, with the
30 introduction of branched DNA junctions that could be assembled via the ligation of double
31 stranded DNA (dsDNA) oligomers with sticky ends (extensions to one of the strands that could
32 hybridize with a complementary sequence on another appropriately designed dsDNA oligomer,^[3]

33 **Figure 1A and 1B.** Based on this approach, a variety of structures have been synthesized, including
34 lattices,^[4] cubes^[5] and closed polyhedral.^[6] 2D crystals of double crossover (DX) DNA have also
35 been formed by sticky end ligation to form DNA tiles,^[7] which can assemble into periodic 2D
36 lattices comprising thousands of constituent tiles. Complex, aperiodic assemblies of DNA tiles can
37 be formed by using a preassembled input DNA strand that encodes the required pattern
38 information, around which other oligonucleotides assemble into specified tiles.^[8] Aperiodic arrays
39 can also be assembled algorithmically starting from a well-designed tile seed^[9] in a form of
40 computational assembly. In addition to 2D arrays, 3D DNA wireframe nanostructures,^[10] as well as
41 3D DNA crystals,^[11] have also been synthesized by sticky end ligation, with some designs reaching

macroscopic dimensions.^[12] **Figure 1C and 1D** shows several representative examples of DNA structural assemblies formed by sticky end cohesion.

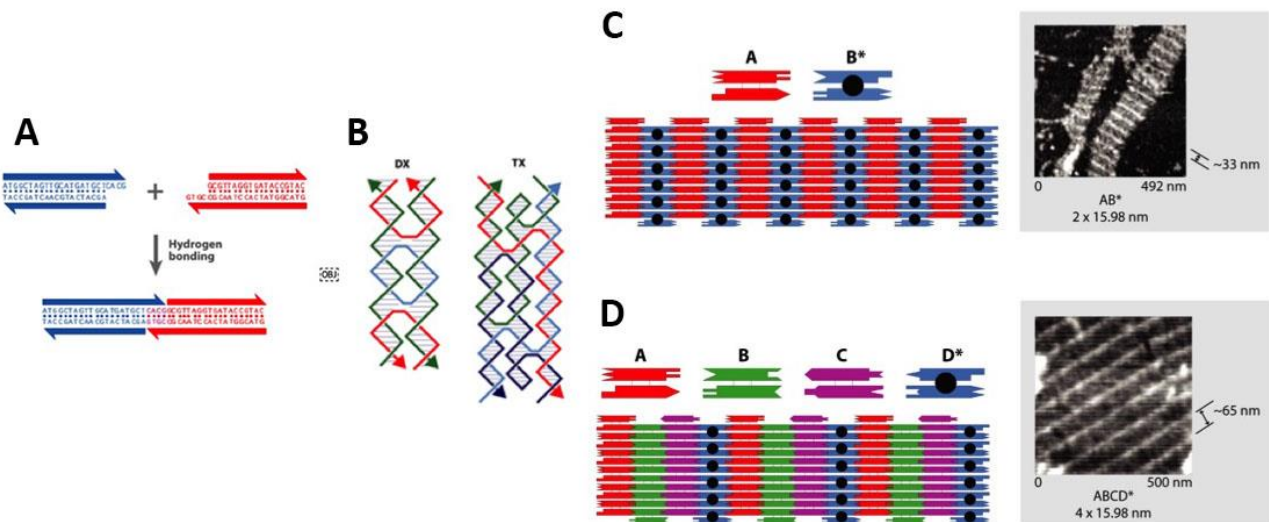


Figure 1. Programming DNA to assume new structural motifs. (A) Sticky end cohesion and ligation. (B) Double and triple crossover DNA structural motifs. (C,D) Two-dimensional arrays of DNA nanostructures formed by sticky end cohesion with associated AFM images of synthesized structures. Modified from N. C. Seeman and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[13]

Even more complex DNA nanostructures became possible with the advent of DNA origami.^[14] Formation of DNA origami involves the intricate folding (**Figure 2A**) of a single scaffold strand of viral DNA by approximately 200 short strands, called “staples,” that bind together specific sequences along the viral strands in a pre-programmed manner, resulting in the creation of the desired shapes (**Figure 2B**). DNA origami surpasses the tiles mentioned above in size and scale. Whereas the building blocks of the tiles contain about 100-500 nucleotide pairs, the DNA origami scaffold consists of about 8000 nucleotides (the staples are approximately 40 bases)^[15] The result is that a single origami structure is approximately 100 nm on a side. Of course, for many applications, larger structures are required, and DNA origami can be made to self-assemble into arrays using sticky ends at selected sites on the edges of the origami. Linear,^[16] crossing^[17] and more arbitrary 2D networks^[18] are possible using different hierarchical organization schemes.

3D origami structures are also possible (**Figure 2C**), and are emerging as promising tool for both materials science and biological applications.^[19] Hollow cubes or cages, formed by interconnecting multiple origami sheets using staple strands at their edges^[20] can be opened or closed using an appropriate DNA “key”. Solid origami structures are formed by stacking double helix cylinders that comprise scaffold and staple strands into multiple layers.^[21] Notably, these structures are formed in a one-pot reaction, as is planar origami. Different solid shapes (e.g., bricks, rods, crosses, nuts, etc.) can be built by modifying the size of the cylinders and the staples that connect them.^[21]

Larger structures can be achieved by bridging between the solid building blocks using additional staple strands. Careful design of the cylinders can build a small degree of strain between adjacent layers, resulting in curved, solid origami structures with complex designs.^[22, 23]

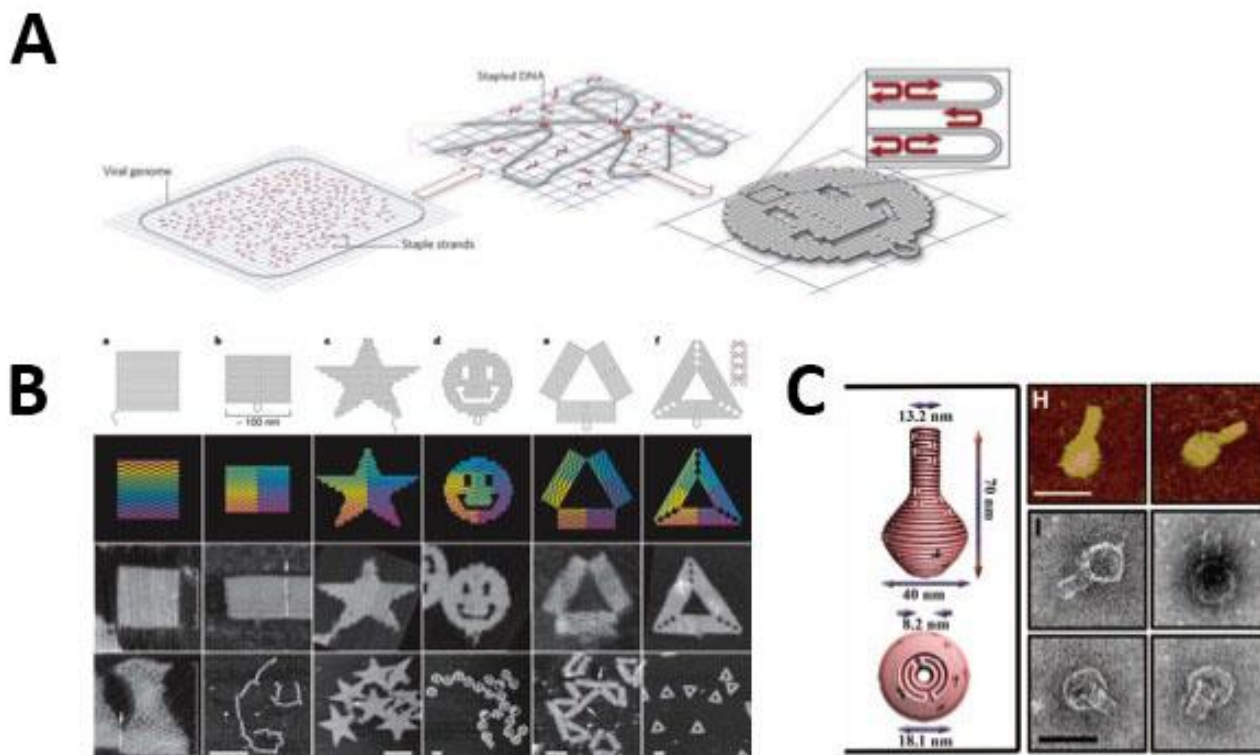


Figure 2 Supramolecular DNA arrays formulated through the DNA origami process. (A) DNA origami concept showing the stapling together of a viral strand of DNA with short oligomers (B) Gallery of origami shapes (C) Curved 3D DNA origami nanostructures. Modified from Seeman et al., Rothemund et al. and Han et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher^[14, 23, 24]

The notion that DNA-based structures could be used as scaffolds for the assembly of biological^[25] and non-biological materials was first articulated by Seeman in 1990.^[26] 1D^[27] and 2D^[28] periodic arrays of inorganic materials, such as Au nanoparticles and semiconducting quantum dots^[29], have been created using DX tiles. 2D DNA origami scaffolds have been the subject of intense study for this type of assembly, with demonstrations of assembly of homogeneous metallic nanoparticles,^[30] quantum dots^[31] and even carbon nanotubes^[32]. The keys to this sort of decoration of the origami with non-biological materials are (a) the functionalization of the material with a biomolecule and (b) modification of the staple strands on the origami with a complementary linker. This has recently been exploited to assemble heterogeneous nanomaterials, including different size metallic nanoparticles and different aptamers which have been placed on the same origami scaffold using this approach with a spatial resolution of approximately 6 nm.^[33]

1 Shortly after the first report of 2D DNA crystals,^[7] such structures were further used to create
2 arrays of DNA and protein molecules^[34]. Interestingly, Koyfman et al have demonstrated the
3 specific attachment of periodic 2D DNA arrays to cells using two different methods involving
4 biotin-streptavidin and specific antibody-cell surface^[35]. Via precise DNA origami design and
5 through their controlled interaction with the cell surface, this approach paves the way to the
6 engineering of cell/surface and cell/cell networks into microtissues.
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10 Self-assembly of DNA has recently been identified as a powerful approach for targeted
11 intracellular delivery of therapeutic payloads through the formulation of nanoparticulate
12 carriers.^[36, 37] Interestingly, DNA nanostructures can readily pass through the membrane barrier^[38]
13 and survive within cells from 24 up to 60 hours^[39]. 1D DNA nanostructures exhibit cellular uptake
14 ^[40], with rolling circle amplification-templated DNA nanotubes showing increased stability and the
15 capability of entering human cervical cancer^[41]. Cell internalization has also been quantified for 2D
16 DNA origami^[42]. Moreover, cell entry pathways of 3D DNA (tetrahedral) nanostructures have
17 notably been investigated^[43] and modulated via single-particle tracking.^[44] Additionally the
18 stability of DNA nanostructures in tissue culture has been recently thoroughly investigated^[45].
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29 A recent study by Sellner *et al.* reported on the DNA tile-assembly method to synthesise DNA-
30 based nanotubes as carrier systems for cytosine-phosphate-guanine (CpG) sequences *in vivo*. Local
31 microinjection of DNA nanoconstructs in intact muscle tissue of healthy mice tissue were observed
32 to accumulate intracellularly in resident macrophages. The inclusion of CpG sequences along the
33 nanotube chemistry induced a strongly elevated immune response, particularly the recruitment of
34 leukocytes from postcapillary venules to the tissue and nuclear translocation of p65, a subunit of
35 the NF- κ B transcription factor complex, which is commonly used as an indicator of NF- κ B
36 activation.^[46] 3D DNA nanostructures have also been employed for intracellular delivery, allowing
37 the transport of immunostimulatory oligonucleotides via the use of CpG functionalised DNA
38 tetrahedra^[47]. These functional nanostructures have shown the ability to enter macrophage-like
39 RAW264.7 cells without the aid of transfection agents. Following their cellular uptake,
40 downstream pathways were activated thanks to the presence of the CpG motifs, inducing
41 immunostimulatory effects ^[47].
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55 Employing a different approach, Li *et al.* explored Y-shaped monomers with three sticky ends, Y-
56 shaped monomers with one sticky end, and DNA linkers with two sticky ends as building blocks for
57 size-controllable and stimuli-responsive DNA nanohydrogels and investigated these DNA hydrogels
58 as effective targeted gene delivery vectors.^[48] The authors concluded that these hydrogels were
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1 effective for targeted and stimuli-responsive gene therapy, noting that cancer therapy strongly
2 inhibited cell proliferation and migration in target A549 cells.

3 DNA self-assembly has also been employed to develop a nuclear-uptake nanodrug system carried
4 by a cell-targeted near-infrared (NIR)-responsive nanotruck for drug-resistant cancer therapy. Via
5 DNA hybridization, small drug-loaded gold nanoparticles were self-assembled on the surface of a
6 silver-gold nanorod which was also modified with a cell type-specific internalizing aptamer. By
7 using this nanodrug delivery system, anticancer drugs were efficiently accumulated in the nuclei to
8 effectively kill cancer cells.^[37]

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16 Aside from delivery ^[38, 49] complementary to the efforts to assemble functional materials on DNA
17 origami is work aimed at controlling the placement of the origami on surfaces.^[50] This is driven by
18 the fact that most of the assembly on origami to date is oriented toward applications in
19 nanoelectronics and plasmonics. Lipid-bilayer-anchored DNA origami structures can be assembled
20 into prescribed superstructures in a programmed manner. The reported DNA-based artificial
21 system can mimic the dynamic assembly of membrane-associated protein clusters that play an
22 essential role in deformation of cellular membranes.^[51]

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30 By and large, the spatial targeting and multivalent properties^[33] of DNA nanostructures are
31 unrivaled by existing techniques. This makes them ideal nanoplatfoms for biological
32 applications^[25]. DNA nanostructures have indeed been employed to transport molecular payloads
33 to cells^[52], for cancer-drug delivery^[53], to map pH gradients along different cellular entry
34 pathways^[54], as synthetic vaccine platforms^[55], to deliver siRNAs into cells to silence target
35 genes^[56], as intracellular logic sensors^[57], and as biological “computing platforms” in living
36 animals^[58].

3. Poly(amino acid) assemblies

3.1. Peptide assemblies

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50 The design and synthesis of peptides that self-assemble controllably into ordered nanostructures
51 is a powerful approach for the development of soft biomaterials^[59]. Moieties capable of mimicking
52 the natural ECM environment can be employed both in fundamental studies of cell-matrix
53 interactions, and in the development of biomimetic materials for regenerative medicine and tissue
54 engineering that have prospects for clinical translation^[60].

1 In this context, peptides are ideal building blocks because of their intrinsic biocompatibility and
2 the multitude of strategies that can be adopted to fabricate novel materials via self-assembly.^[61]
3 Various intermolecular interactions have been employed in the design of peptide-based self-
4 assembling materials, including hydrogen bonding, electrostatic interactions, as well as
5 hydrophobic interactions (between aliphatic residues) and π - π stacking (between aromatic
6 residues).^[62] Peptide materials have been designed to form supramolecular nanostructures
7 presenting biochemical and physicochemical cues that control cell behaviour.^[63, 64, 65] The
8 strategies employed have ranged from biologically inspired ones (e.g. α -helix coils, β -sheets,
9 collagen), to novel approaches (cyclic peptides and amphiphiles).^[66] Different shapes, such as
10 micelles, vesicles and nanofibres, have been obtained.^[67] Moreover, the 3D spatial distribution of
11 chemical moieties has been controlled by changing the peptide conformation to more accurately
12 mimic the natural biochemical cues of the ECM-cell interface.^[68, 69]
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22 Fibrous supramolecular nanostructures formed via peptide self-assembly have been designed to
23 display cell-binding epitopes. β -sheet fibril scaffolds are typically obtained by alternating
24 polar/non-polar amino acid sequences, while two antiparallel β -strands can be joined by a loop to
25 form β -hairpins. Additionally, β -helices can associate with each other to form coiled-coils. Triple
26 helical assembly that mimic collagen can also be obtained with Pro-Hyp-Gly peptides units.^[64]
27 Interestingly, De Santis *et al.* have designed a symmetrical sequence template comprising two
28 generic α -helical modules, N- and C-terminal, with the same number of heptads (structural motifs
29 that consist of a repeating pattern of seven amino acids). They studied the formation of
30 supramolecular fibres varying the total number of heptads, and promoted staggered coiled-coil
31 assembly via oppositely charged heptads.^[70] Different assembly patterns resulted from the
32 synergistic interplay between peptide length, net charge and folding, and supramolecular
33 cooperativity.^[70] Moreover, the same research group has reported a self-assembling peptide gel
34 that supports mammalian cell proliferation and resists bacterial colonization. These fibrous
35 networks proved to be attractive biomimetic architectural models for different extracellular
36 matrices.^[71]
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51 Nanofibres formed via self-assembly of peptide amphiphiles (PAs), have also generated great
52 interest in the field of regenerative medicine.^[69] PAs tend to contain alkyl tails covalently attached
53 to the end of a peptide chain, encouraging their self-assembly into anisotropic nanostructures that
54 can chemically and mechanically interact with cells. PA nanofibres presenting a neurite-promoting
55 laminin epitope IKVAV were shown to induce selective differentiation of neural progenitor cells.^[72]
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The direct injection of these peptide amphiphile solutions into rat spinal cords was further shown to trigger the localized self-assembly of the aforementioned 3D scaffold and promote axon elongation after injury.^[73] More recently, Mammadov *et al.* developed PA nanofibres containing laminin-derived peptide signals along with a heparan-sulfate-mimicking group.^[74] These scaffolds significantly promoted neurite outgrowth by PC-12 cells and were shown to be effective even in the presence of inhibitory components of the central nervous system.

Interestingly, self-assembling peptides carrying a di-glycine linker and the functional motifs SKPPGTSS, PFSSTKT and RGD, were recently reported to act as nanofibre-based 3D tissue culturing systems for neural cells by Koutsopoulos and Zhang.^[75] The authors of this work showed that neural stem cells present marked differentiation into projection neurons, astrocytes and oligodendrocytes when encapsulated in the aforementioned hydrogel matrices. Moreover, the long-term (up to 5 months) culturing in serum-free medium achievable with this system, can allow for more realistic biological studies of neural cells in a biomimetic 3D environment (**Figure 3**).

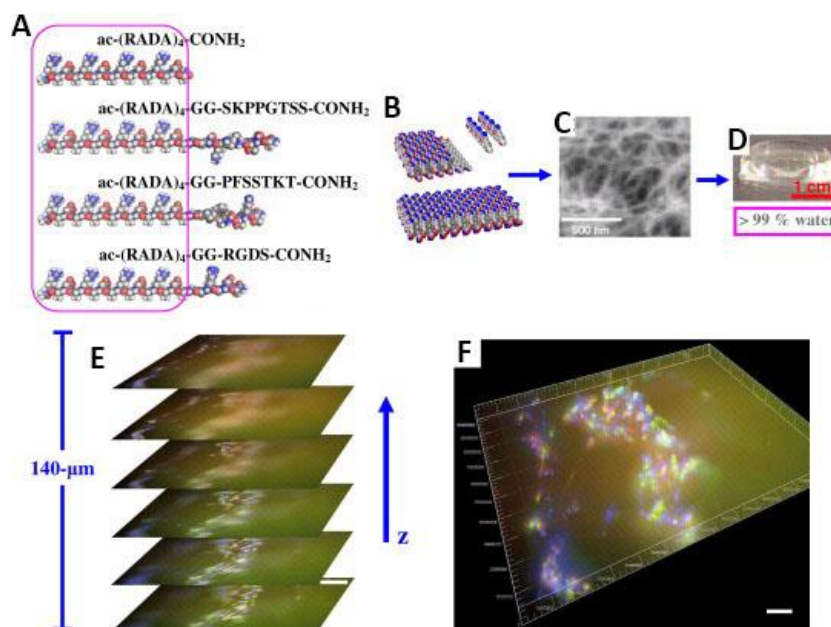


Figure 3 Molecular models of a self-assembling peptide $ac-(RADA)_4-CONH_2$ and of a modified self-assembling peptide carrying a di-glycine linker and the functional motifs SKPPGTSS, PFSSTKT and RGDS. Color code: carbon, grey; oxygen, red; nitrogen, blue; hydrogen, white. (B) Molecular model of the self-assembling peptide and of the nanofiber formed upon assembly of the peptide monomers. (C) SEM picture of the peptide nanofibers inside the hydrogel. (D) Picture of the peptide hydrogel. (E-F) Microscopy image volume representation of neural cells encapsulated in the peptide hydrogel. Images were acquired at 2 week culture in which nestin(+) neural progenitors, cells (green) and Tuj1(+) neurons (red) appear at different z-planes; Scale bar is 200 μm . Modified from Koutsopoulos *et al* and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[75]

Ionic self-complementary peptides and PAs have also been developed as β -sheet forming systems that assemble into nanofibres and 3D scaffolds for nerve repair.^[76] Very recently, Li *et al.* have shown that aligned RGDS-PA gels are able to satisfy the requirements of mimicry of native nerve

1 ultrastructure and bioactivity.^[77] Schwann cell proliferation, attachment, and alignment were
2 demonstrated employing the aforementioned biomaterial. Remarkably, in vivo testing revealed
3 the recovery of motor and sensory function in animals treated with conduit/PA constructs.^[77] A
4 different study by Angeloni *et al.* showed that sonic hedgehog (SHH) treatment of cavernous
5 nerves via aligned PAs nano-fibres significantly improves erectile function.^[78] The use of (C16)-
6 V2A2E2-(NH₂) PA monodomain noodle gels was shown to promote nerve regeneration and
7 suppress penile apoptosis.^[78] This study demonstrated the important role of SHH in the
8 regeneration of CN in prostatectomy and diabetic patients, potentially paving the way to
9 important clinical applications.

10 Recent reviews have also discussed the application of peptide nanofibres in bone regeneration
11 and biomineralization.^[64, 65] Notably a 3D self-assembling leucine zipper (LZ) hydrogel that was
12 synthesized and functionalized with RGD domains. In vivo implantation of the LZ scaffolds in a
13 mouse model showed them to be relatively non-immunogenic (i.e., absence of a foreign body
14 reaction to the scaffold), while experiments with human marrow showed the biological property
15 of the hydrogel to promote cell attachment/proliferation and its ability to support
16 neovascularization.^[79]

17 Additionally, self-assembling peptide scaffolds have been successfully employed for cartilage
18 tissue engineering. Peptide-based nanofiber networks highly resembling natural extracellular
19 matrixes have been shown the ability to regenerate cartilage tissue both in vitro and in vivo.^[80]
20 Peptide amphiphiles designed to form nanofibres and display a high density of binding epitopes to
21 transforming growth factor β -1 (TGF β -1), have been employed for articular cartilage
22 regeneration.^[81] In vitro experiments indicated that these materials promote the chondrogenic
23 differentiation of human mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs). Additionally, these epitope-modified
24 supramolecular nanofibres enhanced the regenerative potential of microfracture-treated chondral
25 defects in a rabbit model.

26 Angiogenesis, the process of new blood vessel generation, plays an important role in tissue growth
27 and regeneration. Peptide-based assemblies have been employed to enhance or inhibit this
28 process.^[64] PA-based nanofilaments have been designed to display on their surfaces a VEGF-
29 mimetic peptide, because VEGF is one of the most potent angiogenic signaling proteins.^[82]
30 Proangiogenic behaviour in endothelial cells was demonstrated in vitro, while in vivo experiments
31 showed that the nanofibres increased tissue perfusion, functional recovery, limb salvage, and
32 treadmill endurance. In a more recent study, the same research group has discussed the synthesis
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1 and the anti-angiogenic activity, both in vitro and in vivo, of supramolecular nanostructures
2 formed via the self-assembly of small PAs containing the G-helix motif of maspin.^[83] In vitro cell
3 assays demonstrated that these short nanofibres inhibit endothelial cell motility via G-helix
4 mediated pathways, and block tubulogenesis at sub-micromolar concentrations. In vivo studies
5 further showed evidence of the nanostructures' effectiveness at inhibiting angiogenesis in the
6 chicken embryo chorioallantois. Notably, Kumar *et al.* have reported multidomain peptide
7 sequences (MDPs) conjugated with a VEGF mimic to promote angiogenesis. The MDPs consisted of
8 terminally charged residues that flank alternating hydrophilic and hydrophobic residues and
9 associate into bilayers of antiparallel β -sheets. Kumar *et al.* have synthesized MDPs with
10 KKSLSLSLSLSLSLK as the base peptide sequence, modified with a VEGF mimic. Nanofibrous
11 hydrogels of these peptides were shown to be cytocompatible, and were delivered by simple
12 syringe injection demonstrating excellent tissue integration. The hydrogels were rapidly infiltrated
13 by hematopoietic and mesenchymal cells forming a robust vascular network.^[84]

24 Anti-inflammatory peptide amphiphiles have also been used in tissue regeneration, and exhibited
25 potent angiogenic responses, limited tissue collagen accumulation, and the modulation of
26 macrophage response in regenerated bladder tissue.^[85] Additionally, heparin-binding PAs (HBPA)
27 have been designed to release growth factors for both angiogenesis and cardiovascular disease.^[86]
28 Heparin is a natural biopolymer known to interact with different growth factors. Self-assembling
29 peptide nanofibres presenting heparin were shown to bind paracrine factors. Moreover,
30 significant preservation of haemodynamic function was observed when these nanomaterials were
31 injected into the heart following coronary artery ligation in a mouse ischaemia-reperfusion model
32 of acute myocardial infarction.^[87]

42 Interestingly, cell fate can be controlled via the proper design of self-assembling peptide-based
43 nanostructures. Kuang *et al.* have demonstrated that hydrogels/nanonets of self-assembled
44 aromatic tripeptide amphiphiles can selectively form around the pericellular space of cancer cells
45 that overexpress phosphatases and thereby induce apoptosis of the cancer cells.^[88] Differently,
46 Stupp and *et al.* have systematically studied the influence of hydrogen bonding, hydrophobic
47 domains and charge of PA materials on their interactions with cells.^[89] They demonstrated that
48 cell viability is affected by intermolecular interactions: the disruption of the cell membrane can be
49 induced by the interaction of less cohesive assemblies with the lipid membrane and materials that
50 induce cell death can create a barrier to cell migration in 3D cultures.^[89]

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In order to combine the intrinsic biocompatibility and nanoscale control of peptide assemblies with the stability and processability of synthetic polymers, different studies have exploited co-assembly strategies between polymers and peptides for scaffold fabrication in tissue engineering. Indeed, peptide-polymer conjugates have been co-electrospun with a host polymer to fabricate peptide gradient scaffolds.^[90] The peptide-polymer conjugate system specifically and dynamically bind glycosaminoglycans secreted by cells. Employing a different approach, Capito *et al.* have reported on the formation of macroscopic sacs membranes used to encapsulate cells. These sacs were obtained via the self-assembly of a charged megadalton polymer and peptide amphiphiles.^[91] Various membranes were further fabricated via the selective assembly of hyaluronic acid with positively charged PA containing anti-cancer PAs bearing a (KLAKLAK)₂ peptide sequence. In this way ad hoc designed membranes were able to be used as reservoirs for sustained release of cytotoxicity (upon enzymatic degradation).^[92] In a similar way, Mendes *et al.* used a positively charged multidomain peptide, with and without the arginine-glycine-aspartic acid-serine (RGDS) cell-adhesive peptide sequence, and a high molecular weight negatively charged biopolymer, to assemble bioactive membranes.^[93] A photolithography patterning process was then used for the fabrication of membranes displaying posts, holes, channels and pores ranging from 10 to 20 μm . Cell adhesion, spreading, and morphology were reported to be significantly affected by the surface topographical patterns and the different concentrations of RGDS of the membranes.^[93]

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In this context, a more recent study has further highlighted the ability of modulating certain cellular activities through matrix engineering. Ferreira *et al.* have indeed designed a PA able to self-assemble with hyaluronan into membranes containing a proteolytic domain sensitive to matrix metalloproteinase-1.^[94] This study suggests that membranes that include the matrix metalloproteinase-1 cleavable sequence stimulate protease secretion, leading to cell-mediated degradation processes.^[94]

46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 **3.2. Protein assemblies**

Proteins have evolved in biology for task-specific roles (catalysis, energy transfer, structure). Processes such as catalysis and energy transfer are commonly undertaken by proteins with well-defined structures in specific locations in biological pathways, whereas the proteins responsible for structural roles are either structures formed from well-defined numbers of individual protein building blocks (e.g. viral capsids) or assemblies of ill-defined numbers of individual protein building blocks (e.g. cytoskeletal actin). Proteins can be isolated from a variety of sources, including mammals (e.g. collagens, elastins, fibronectins, keratins and laminins), non-mammals

1 (e.g. mussel byssus, silkworm/spider silks), plants (e.g. soy or zein) and recombinamers (genetically
2 engineered recombinant proteins typically produced by fermentation in bacteria or yeast), and are
3 widely used in drug delivery and tissue engineering.^[95]

4
5 Researchers have made incredible progress in the use of viral capsids as self-assembling templates
6 for new materials with potential for application in nanotechnology (e.g. light harvesting,
7 photocatalysis, biomedicine) ^[96] . Virus-based or virus-inspired assemblies represent drug and
8 nucleic acid delivery devices in which the biodistribution of the therapeutic agent can be
9 controlled by ligand-cell receptor interactions, which may markedly enhance the effectiveness of
10 the drug (and ideally reduce side effects associated with the toxicity of the therapeutic),
11 encouraging the development of virus-like protein assemblies/cages exhibiting viral functions such
12 as cell recognition/penetration and compartment-aimed payload delivery. Consequently, virus-
13 based or virus-inspired assemblies are a hot topic in the field of protein engineering drug
14 delivery,^[97, 98, 99] or indeed tissue engineering,^[100] and various approaches to their safe
15 manufacture and use are under investigation.^[101]

16
17 The natural role of viruses as vectors for DNA and RNA delivery inspired their use for the delivery
18 of therapeutic DNA and RNA payloads in the field of gene therapy, now a multimillion dollar
19 industry. Gene therapy was first used commercially in China for the treatment of certain cancers
20 with Gendicine; thereafter, gene therapies were developed in Russia for the treatment of
21 peripheral artery disease with Neovasculgen[®], and the treatment of lipoprotein lipase deficiency
22 with Glybera in Europe. Gene therapies are currently being investigated for a variety of conditions,
23 including haemophilia, lymphocytic leukemia, multiple myeloma and Parkinson's disease, and we
24 expect to see many more clinically translated gene therapies in coming years.

25
26 It is noteworthy that the viral payload need not necessarily be DNA or RNA, and the payload could
27 instead be a low ^[98, 99] or high molecular weight^[102] therapeutic. Indeed, the delivery of low
28 molecular weight therapeutics such as porphyrins (capable of generating singlet oxygen upon
29 illumination) facilitates the application of such nanoscale assemblies for photodynamic therapy for
30 the treatment of cancers or pathogens^[103]. Likewise, it is possible to deliver drugs to specific
31 tissues (e.g. liver^[104], colon^[105]) including tissues that are typically challenging to deliver drugs to
32 (e.g. across the blood-brain barrier ^[106]), highlighting their prospects for use as theranostic agents
33 (i.e. agents capable of diagnosis of a condition and its treatment)^[107] ^[108].

34
35 Furthermore, viruses and virus-like assemblies can be repurposed for tissue engineering
36 applications. Indeed, two-and three-dimensional scaffolds based on such assemblies can be

employed as an artificial ECM capable of regulating cellular functions as reviewed by Zhao and *et al.*^[100] Such scaffolds are particularly interesting as viruses such as Tobacco mosaic virus has been shown to have low immunogenicity towards mammals (e.g. mice)^[109].

Biomaterials based on other proteins are incredibly popular biomaterials; their popularity stems from their ease of processing into various materials morphologies (e.g. fibers, films, foams, gels or particulates), the structural diversity of the proteins available (both from natural and recombinant sources) which yields materials with highly tunable chemical, mechanical and topographical properties. A comprehensive overview is beyond the scope of this review as the literature is even vaster than that for self-assembling peptides, therefore we direct the reader towards a selection of reviews^[110, 111]. Clearly, when contemplating preparing non-viral protein-based biomaterials the use of proteins isolated from the extracellular matrix (collagen, elastin, fibronectin, laminin) is popular, in part because we may be able to use a patient's own ECM-derived proteins to make such materials which is particularly important in patients with weak immune systems. Consequently, there are abundant reports of extracellular matrix protein-based biomaterials either as isolated components, or as mixtures isolated after decellularization processes^[112]. There are also interesting reports of ECM-mimetic recombinamers which yield proteins with improved solubilities than their natural counterparts (e.g. elastin-mimetic proteins)^[113]; and indeed non-mammalian proteins Soy^[114], Zein^[115], Mussel byssus^[116], or silks from various species used for drug delivery^[117] or tissue scaffolds (e.g. for intervertebral discs^[118] or bones^[119]).

4. Polysaccharide assemblies

The abundant supply of natural polysaccharides such as alginate, cellulose, chitin or hyaluronic acid (mammalian ECM), and low/no immunogenic response to the polymers have made them popular components in drug delivery devices and tissue scaffolds.^[120]

Alginates are isolated from the cell walls of algae and are widely used components of bulk hydrogels.^[121] Doxorubicin functionalized alginates have been encapsulated inside PA nanofibers functionalized for targeting the folate receptor, and such supramolecular assemblies were shown to display 6-fold higher cytotoxicity against MDA-MB-231 breast cancer cells compared to those without the targeting groups.^[122] In-situ gelation of suspensions of MSCs in alginate triggered by Ca^{2+} ions has been reported to produce injectable hydrogels that enable chondrogenic differentiation of the MSCs in vitro, and when implanted in nude mice the hydrogels facilitated cartilage tissue regeneration.^[123]

While cellulose is incredibly important for building (wood) and printing (paper) industries its poor

1 solubility has made it challenging to work with, however the isolation of nanocellulose crystals
2 (which are hierarchically ordered fibrillar assemblies of cellulose) has invigorated research in its
3 application in biomedicine.^[124] Supramolecular assemblies of nanocellulose fibrils decorated with
4 β -cyclodextrins with pluronic polymers threaded through them were shown to form bulk
5 hydrogels suitable for the delivery of doxorubicin.^[125] Bulk hydrogels composed of nanocellulose
6 fibrils embedded in gelatin-rich in-situ crosslinking gels were shown to induce the differentiation
7 of HepaRG progenitor cells to organotypic 3D spheroids with bile duct compartments in the core
8 that expressed hepatocyte markers, metabolic activity and vectorial molecular transport towards
9 the bile duct compartment.^[126]

10 Chitin is isolated from the cell walls of fungi and animal exoskeletons, and once deacetylated
11 yields cationic chitosan.^[127] Supramolecular self-assembled nanocomplexes of oleyl-conjugated
12 trimethyl chitosan, poly(γ -(4-((2-(piperidin-1-yl)ethyl)aminomethyl)benzyl-L-glutamate), oleyl-PEG-
13 mannose (OPM), and plasmid DNA encoding luciferase were capable of mannose receptor-
14 mediated endocytosis and permeable to the cellular and endosomal membranes of HepG-2 cells,
15 thereby enabling non-viral gene delivery that outperforms commercial transfection reagents,
16 including LPF2000, PEI, and jetPEI, by up to 2 orders of magnitude.^[128] With a view towards
17 engineering the soft component of bones, supramolecular gels formed from polyelectrolyte
18 complexes of chitosan and ulvan were shown to be suitable for osteoblasts culture in vitro.^[129] The
19 removal of a 3D printed sacrificial template embedded in hydrogen bond crosslinked assemblies of
20 nanochitosan fibrils yielded porous hydrogels (in which the pore structure was dictated by the
21 structure of the sacrificial template) that were coated with gelatin and calcium phosphate and
22 shown to support the differentiation of human MSCs towards osteogenic outcomes.^[130]

23 Hyaluronic acid is a natural non-sulfated glycosoaminoglycan that plays important roles in cell-cell
24 interactions, cell adhesion and migration, and binds to the cell-surface glycoprotein CD44. CD44 is
25 itself involved in a multitude of biological processes, is overexpressed in many tumours, and
26 involved in cancer metastasis. This renders drug loaded supramolecular assemblies of hyaluronic
27 acid interesting vehicles for cancer cell-targeted drug delivery;^[131] for example decoration of
28 hyaluronic acid with hydrophobic cholesterol moieties encouraged their self-assembly into
29 micellar structures capable of delivering complexes of 2b RNA-binding protein and siRNA to
30 murine melanoma (B16F10) cells and suppress the activity of the target RFP gene.^[132] It would also
31 be possible to fill the cavity left after excision of a tumour with a supramolecular hydrogel formed
32 from mixtures of hyaluronic acid derivatives displaying curcuburitics and polyamine-decorated
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hyaluronic acid derivatives. Such gels were able to support the growth and proliferation of NIH3T3 mouse fibroblast cells, and were shown to be both rapidly integrated with no noticeable immune response after 7 days of implantation in nude mice.^[133] Exciting subsequent studies incorporating engineered MSCs producing enhanced green fluorescence protein demonstrated that the MSCs remain alive in the gels and emit the fluorescence when implanted in mice for more than 60 days. Interestingly, the long-term expression of mutant interleukin-12 by the engineered MSCs within the supramolecular hydrogels results in effective inhibition of tumour growth with a significantly enhanced survival rate.^[134] Moreover, these hydrogels also allow the differentiation of hMSCs to be temporally controlled by changing the release profiles of transforming growth factor- β 3 and/or dexamethasone from the hydrolyzable dexamethasone displaying curcubitil derivative (Dexa-CB[6]), and have potential for cartilage regeneration (**Figure 4**).^[135]

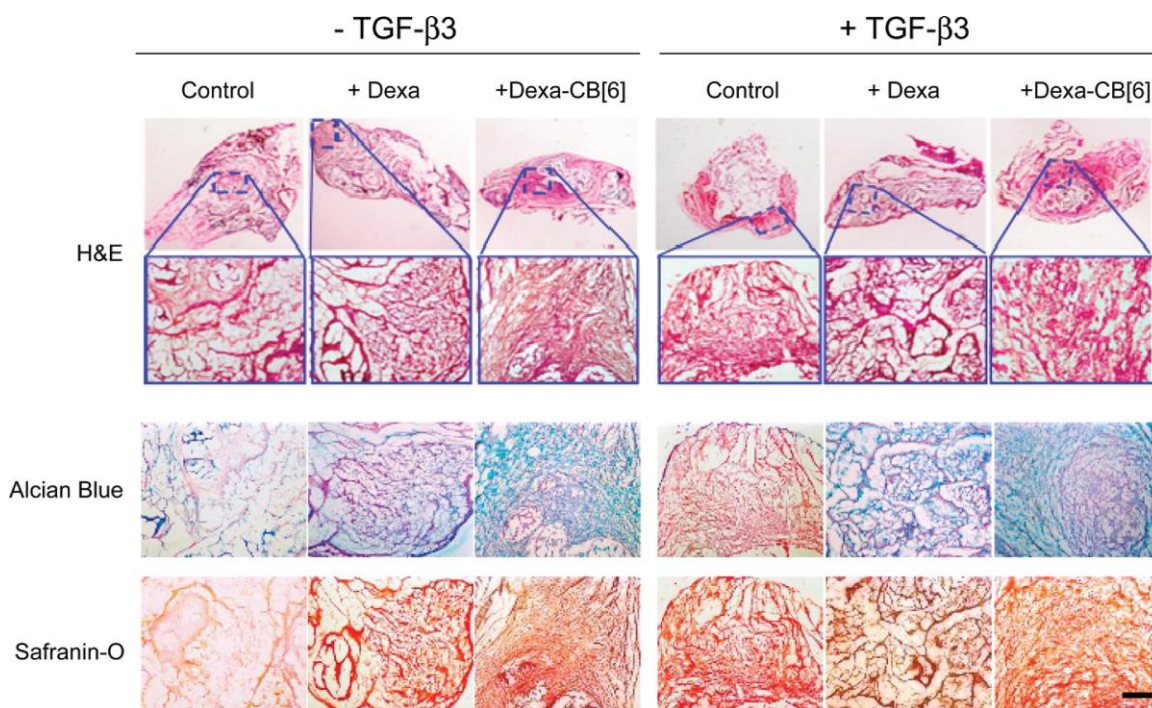


Figure 4. Histological analysis of neocartilage formation in vivo by the differentiation of hMSCs in monoCB[6]/DAH-HA hydrogels. Gels were prepared without and with free dexamethasone or Dexa-CB[6] in the absence and presence of TGF- β 3 and analysis performed via staining with H&E, Alcian blue, and Safranin-O at 4 weeks. Modified from Jung et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[135]

5. Synthetic polymer assemblies

5.1. Drug delivery and tissue scaffolds

Monodisperse biopolymers such as DNA and proteins have inspired the development of synthetic polymers that are monodisperse (e.g. dendrimers)^[98] or effectively monodisperse (e.g. block copolymers prepared via living polymerizations).^[136] Such polymers can hierarchically assemble

1 into well-defined polymer assemblies in direct analogy to the biopolymers that inspired their
2 creation.^[137, 138] Well-defined polymer-based assemblies of this nature are relatively new, and the
3 development for biomedical applications has focused primarily on drug delivery systems.^[138, 139]
4 However, we believe that functional supramolecular assemblies of polymers show incredible
5 promise for both drug delivery^[140] and tissue engineering^[141] as we highlight below. Some systems
6 self-assemble because of their surfactant-like properties, whereas others require the addition of
7 one or more components to induce self-assembly, and cyclodextrins (which form inclusion
8 complexes with the other component(s)) are a popular means of achieving this.^[142]
9

10 Polyaspartic acid residues are found in natural calcium-based biominerals,^[143, 144] and polyaspartic
11 acid-base biomaterials biomineralized with calcium phosphate have been shown to support the
12 adhesion and proliferation of MSCs, and such materials may find application in bone tissue
13 engineering.^[143] Supramolecular assemblies of β -cyclodextrin functionalized poly(aspartic acid)
14 derivatives with adamantane functionalized RGD peptides and adamantane functionalized
15 camptothecin, and in vitro studies showed them to be potent delivery vehicles for camptothecin
16 to COS 7 and HeLa cells.^[145] Supramolecular vesicular aggregates composed of folate decorated
17 poly(aspartic acid) derivatives (polyaspartyl-hydrazide copolymers) that were capable of delivering
18 low molecular weight gemcitabine to cancer cell lines, with a significantly higher uptake by MCF-7
19 cells which over-express the folate receptor than BxPC-3 cells which do not over-express this
20 receptor; their pharmacokinetics showed that they were removed from the circulatory system at a
21 slower rate than the native drug, and prolonged gemcitabine plasma concentration was observed
22 for up to 16 hours.^[146] Likewise, supramolecular assemblies based on the FDA approved
23 polycaprolactone^[147] have been investigated for their potential in drug delivery; and
24 supramolecular hydrogels prepared from α -cyclodextrin-based inclusion complexes with diblock
25 copolymers (polycaprolactone-co-polyethyleneglycol) grafted with chitoooligosaccharides were
26 capable of sustained release of a model high molecular weight drug (a protein, bovine serum
27 albumin).^[148] Further, hydrogels composed of electroactive α -cyclodextrin complexes of
28 polyethyleneglycol derivatives terminated with electroactive aniline oligomers were shown to
29 facilitate the electrical stimulation (a square wave, frequency of 100 Hz, 50% duty cycle, and
30 electrical potential of 0.5 V were applied for 0.5 hours every day) of rat cardiomyoblast (HC92)
31 cells residing therein which promoted their proliferation relative to non-stimulated controls.^[149]
32

33 Meijer and *et al.* have produced some of the most exciting work in this field, and developing
34 supramolecular materials based on polymers displaying quadruple hydrogen-bonding ureido-
35

pyrimidinone (UPy) moieties.^[150] Indeed, oligocaprolactones terminated with UPy moieties were shown to be processable into a variety of biomedically relevant materials morphologies including films, fibers, and 3D printed foams.^[150] These materials supported the adhesion and proliferation of fibroblasts in vitro, and when implanted in rats, certain formulations showed evidence of vascularization after 5 days, with relatively minimal immunogenicity.^[150, 151] An interesting study of supramolecular polymers formed from poly(caprolactone) derivatives terminated with quadruple hydrogen-bonding ureido-pyrimidinone moieties and hydroxyapatite nanoparticles functionalized with ureido-pyrimidinone moieties, reported their ability to support the adhesion and proliferation of MSCs, with a view to their use as bone tissue scaffolds.^[152] Moreover, hydrogels formed from ureidopyrimidinone (UPy) terminated poly(ethylene glycol) have been shown to be effective drug delivery vehicles, enabling the delivery of protein drugs to kidneys with incredibly low inflammation (14 to 23 times less endotoxin than the value permitted by the FDA);^[153] and analogous gels enabled the delivery of growth factors to kidneys (**Figure 5**).^[154]

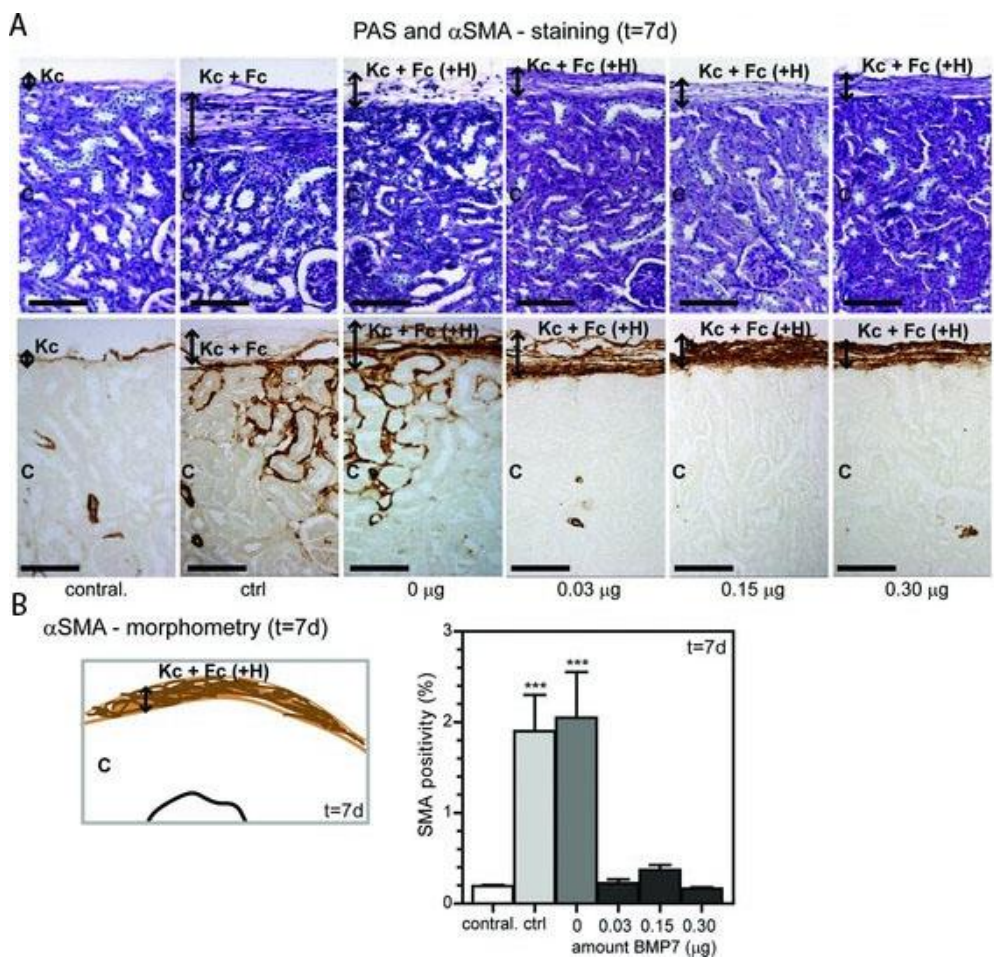


Figure 5 A Modular Injectable Supramolecular Delivery System: In-vivo growth factor delivery in the kidney. (A) After 7 days, the effect of BMP7 delivery under the renal capsule from the hydrogels was studied in the kidney cortex (C). The hydrogel was eroded and a thick capsule was formed which is proposed to be composed of the kidney capsule (Kc), the fibrous capsule (Fc) and possible remnants of the hydrogel (H), indicated with (Kc +Fc (+H)). The kidney morphology was evaluated with a periodic acid Schiff base (PAS) staining. As references, the contralateral kidney

(contral.) and the kidney with only saline (ctrl) are shown. The presence of myofibroblasts in the renal cortex was evaluated with an α -smooth muscle actin (α -SMA) staining. All scale bars represent 100 μ m. (B) Schematic representation of the cortex at the site of implantation after 7 days. Morphometry was used to quantify the presence of myofibroblasts in the renal cortex using the α -SMA staining. Modified from Dankers et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[154]

5.2. Smart biomedical devices using shape-memory polymers (SMPs)

Shape-memory polymers (SMPs) are able to memorize a macroscopic shape, exist in a temporary shape under specific conditions of temperature, stress and environmental stimuli, and then relax to the original permanent, stress-free condition,^[155, 156] and SMPs have been used as functional textiles,^[157] active aircraft equipment,^[158] interactive electronic apparatuses,^[159] and adaptive biomedical devices.^[160, 161]

SMPs are typically classified by the type of stimulus which elicits a physicochemical response (e.g. temperature,^[162] solvation,^[163] pH,^[164] electrical fields,^[165, 166] magnetic fields^[167] or light); and as well as stimuli descriptors, SMPs can be further classified by their material properties, i.e. polymer crystallinity index, crosslinking profile, mechanism responsible for the shape-memory effect,^[168] and to predict responsiveness the architecture of the polymer needs to be considered with respect to the presence of chemical/physical crosslinks, yielding thermoset or thermoplastic polymers, respectively.^[169] Physically crosslinked polymers show reversible interaction, and can be either amorphous or semicrystalline (i.e. the transition temperature is either a glass transition temperature (T_g), or a melting point (T_m)^[169-171]), however, the covalent bonds present in thermoplastic polymers connecting switching components can be difficult to reverse. Moreover, the shape-memory effect of polymer systems are attributed to the microphase separation of the net-points, which depends on the molecular weight and composition of the crosslinked segments.^[170] Based on the nature of the net-point and switching components, thermally activated SMPs can be categorized into four main groups:^[172] 1) physically crosslinked net-points with amorphous molecular switches; 2) physically crosslinked net-points with semicrystalline molecular switches; 3) chemically crosslinked net-points with amorphous molecular switches; 4) chemically crosslinked net-points with semicrystalline molecular switches.^[171] The first two groups are thermoplastics and the last two are thermosetting SMPs,^[173] examples of which are depicted in **Figure 6**.

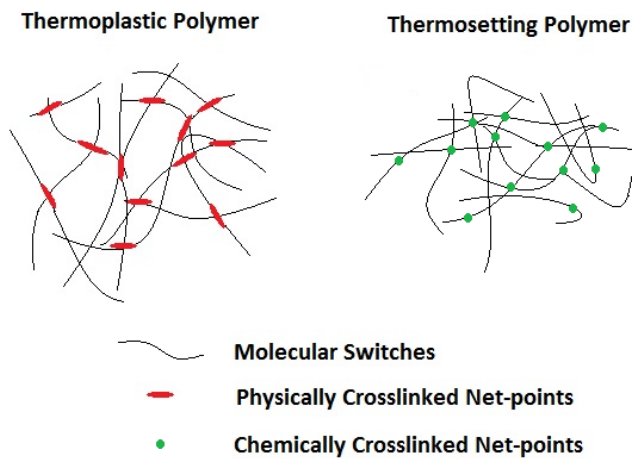


Figure 6. Schematic of thermoplastic and thermosetting polymer networks. Modified from Liu et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[174]

In thermoplastic SMPs, hard segments are responsible for chain-chain interactions via hydrogen bonding or dipole-dipole interactions. Good moldability, high modulus below T_{trans} and high deformability are some advantages of physically crosslinked block copolymers.^[171] However, the molecular weight of the polymer chains needs to be high enough for entanglement or phase separation.^[171] Certain polyurethanes (PU) show promise as SMPs and have many advantages due to their excellent shape-memory properties and biocompatibility.^[169] PUs include urethane bonds (carbamates) generated from the reaction of diisocyanates with glycol chain extenders as hard segments and suitably chosen diisocyanates, commonly polyether chains, as soft segments.^[175] Shape-memory properties, transition temperature range and melting point of these smart polymers can be controlled by changing the soft to hard segment ratio.^[176]

Chemically crosslinked SMPs have higher stiffness and shape-memory effects, high transition temperature and environmental durability in comparison with thermoplastics,^[174] and are prepared either by adding a multi-functional crosslinker during the polymerization or in the post curing process.^[177] The shape-memory phenomena in SMPs appear via changing of the chemical structure, the degree of crosslinking and the fraction of amorphous and crystalline domains.^[178] Instead of direct heating, thermo-responsive polymers can be triggered to show shape-memory function by applying electricity, magnetism, light, microwave or moisture.^[165, 179] With direct triggering, both programming and recovery stages are possible; however, indirect stimuli work only during the recovery process making use of another stimulus necessary for the temporary fixation. Generally, indirect stimuli include water, electric current and magnetic field; whereas light can be considered as either a direct or indirect stimulus.^[180] In order to enhance the response of SMPs, multiple stimuli can be applied simultaneously or shape changes can be triggered step-by-step.^[165, 181]

To exemplify the use of SMPs for biomedical devices, we highlight light-responsive systems,^[182] that typically incorporate photo-cleavable units (e.g. cinnamic acid-based molecules) or photoisomerizable units (e.g. azobenzenes)^[180] as depicted in **Figure 7**. Photo-crosslinkable sites in polymer networks respond to the light of wavelength λ_1 and the temporary shape (Figure 4-c) is stable until the polymer is exposed to an appropriate stimulus light,^[183] yielding light-actuated biodegradable SMPs that can be applied as smart sutures for wound closure.^[184]

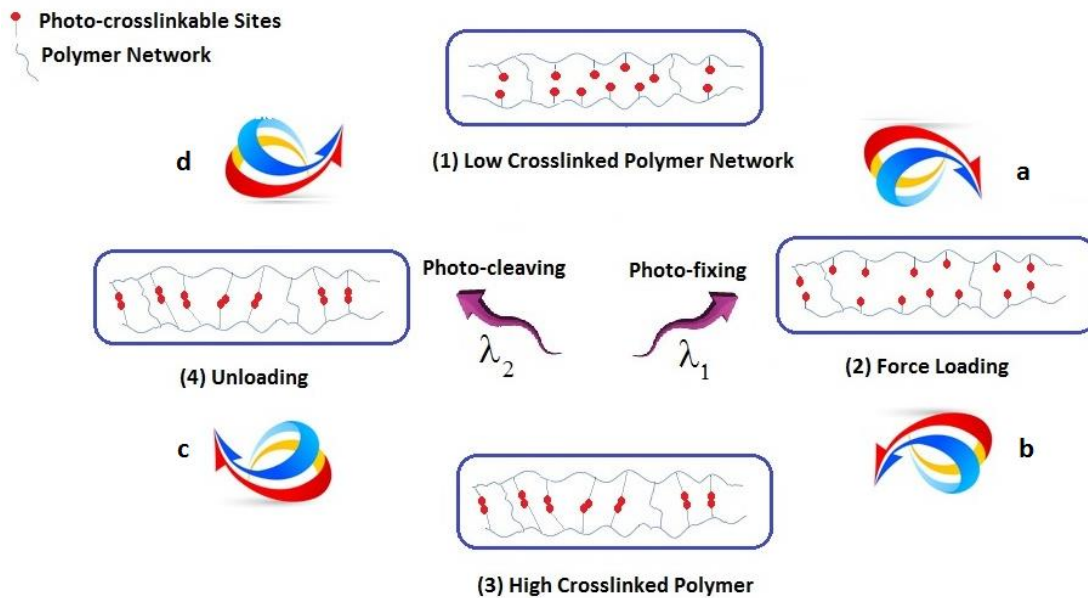


Figure 7. Schematic of molecular mechanism of photo activated SMP (a) Deforming polymer by applying stress, (b) photo-fixing with light of wavelength λ_1 , (c) Unloading external stress, (d) photo-cleaving by exposing to light of wavelength λ_2 .

Interest in this field has increased considerably, after the commercial success of SMP products as drug delivery systems and medical devices for minimally invasive surgery has been growing. The main application of these smart materials are listed in **Table 1**. Clearly, changing the chemistry of SMPs in order to modify their biocompatibility, strength, shape recovery and biodegradability are particularly important areas for future research.

Table 1. Applications of shape-memory polymers in regenerative medicine.

Application	Material	Reference
Drug delivery	PCG	[185]
	PCL	[155]
	PLGA	[156]
	PLGA	[157]
Clot removal/ Aneurysm	PU], 186, 160[158
Suture	Oligo(caprolactone)- diol + oligo(dioxaxono)ligo(dioxaxone) + diisocyanates][187][168
	Styrene-butadiene + PCL	
Stents	PU MM5520], 188[170
	PEG + PCL][189
	Crosslinked chitosan+ ethylene glycol diglycidyl ether][190
	Block co-polymers PCTBV	
Tissue engineering scaffolds	PGD], 173[172
	PCLDMA	

6. Future Perspectives

The development of materials for drug delivery and tissue engineering is an exciting multidisciplinary field. The focus of research is beginning to shift from bioinert materials (e.g. gold/mercury amalgam in teeth, titanium or polymethylmethacrylates in bone) towards biomimetic biomaterials, naturally focusing on composite materials produced from hierarchically structured supramolecular assemblies. Interesting examples of drug delivery systems and tissue scaffolds have been produced from these materials, and show promise not only in vitro, but in vivo. New advances in both the understanding of self-organization and the control of matter at the

1 nanoscale, are bridging the gap between materials and life sciences. In particular, stimuli-
2 responsive and chemically dynamic materials^[191] show great promise for the advancement of this
3 field of study and for applications in regenerative medicine.

4
5 In addition, while the use of 3D printing technologies for biomedical engineering is still in its
6 nascent stages,^[192] we believe that such technologies have great potential for manufacturing the
7 next generation of biomaterials with topographical information on length scales above those
8 currently manageable with supramolecular chemistry alone. This is particularly important because
9 cells respond to topographical cues (i.e. information stored in the topography of the surface that
10 they are interfacing with, particularly as regards cell adhesion, orientation, and migration.^[193]
11 Moreover, 3-dimensional (3D) cell culture offers a more realistic micro- and local-environment
12 than 2-dimensional cell culture paradigms.^[194] An important factor in the production of working
13 tissue engineering scaffolds is the possibility of a reproducible and controlled method of micro-
14 and sub-micro structuring. A versatile class of the scaffold production techniques which enable the
15 fabrication of tailor made structures directly from computer data via Computer Aided Design /
16 Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAD/CAM), are laser-based Additive Manufacturing (AM)
17 fabrication techniques^[195-197]. A number of them have been implemented and commercialized,
18 such as Laser-assisted Bioprinting (LaB), selective laser sintering (SLS), stereolithography (SL) and
19 Direct Laser Writing (DLW) by Multiphoton Polymerization (MPP).
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34 Laser-assisted Bioprinting (LaB)^[198, 199, 200] is based on laser-induced forward transfer (LIFT), i.e. the
35 selective forward ablation and deposition of materials using lasers. LaB offers the possibility of
36 printing patterns with a high spatial resolution from a wide range of materials in the solid or liquid
37 state. Here, a laser pulse is focused on a thin film of the material to be transferred (the bio-ink,
38 which can be biomaterials, cells, biomolecules) through a transparent support (**Figure 8A**). A small
39 fraction of the film is transferred to a receptor substrate that is placed parallel to the film-support
40 system, a few microns away.^[201] The volume of the material transferred will depend on the optical
41 properties of the bio-ink in respect to the laser properties (wavelength, pulse duration). If the
42 biomaterial is transparent to the laser wavelength, then an intermediate, heat absorbing layer
43 might be needed; usually a thin film of metal such as Au, Cr, Ti, Ag, or a photo-decomposing
44 volatile polymer (e.g. triazene).^[200] An almost infinite number of materials can be transferred using
45 LaB, including hydrogels,^[202] biomolecules,^[203] and living cells,^[199, 204] with minimal effect in the
46 materials properties. Importantly, it was demonstrated that it could be used to make 3D
47 structures, such as capillary patterns for vascular engineering,^[205] a cardiac patch which included
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MSCs and endothelial cells,^[206] and skin;^[207] and moreover, it is the only laser-based AM technique able to directly print biomaterials and cells simultaneously.

Differently, SLS employs a high power laser to sinter layers of material in powder form in order to build 3D structures as depicted in **Figure 8B**. SLS has been extensively used to create replication masters for biomedical implants;^[208] hard scaffolds for bone and cartilage tissue engineering,^[209] often employing mixtures of poly- ϵ -caprolactone (**Figure 8C and 8D**) with calcium phosphates to more accurately mimic bone;^[210] and for soft tissue engineering it has been used to prepare poly- ϵ -caprolactone-based cardiac^[211] tissue scaffolds.

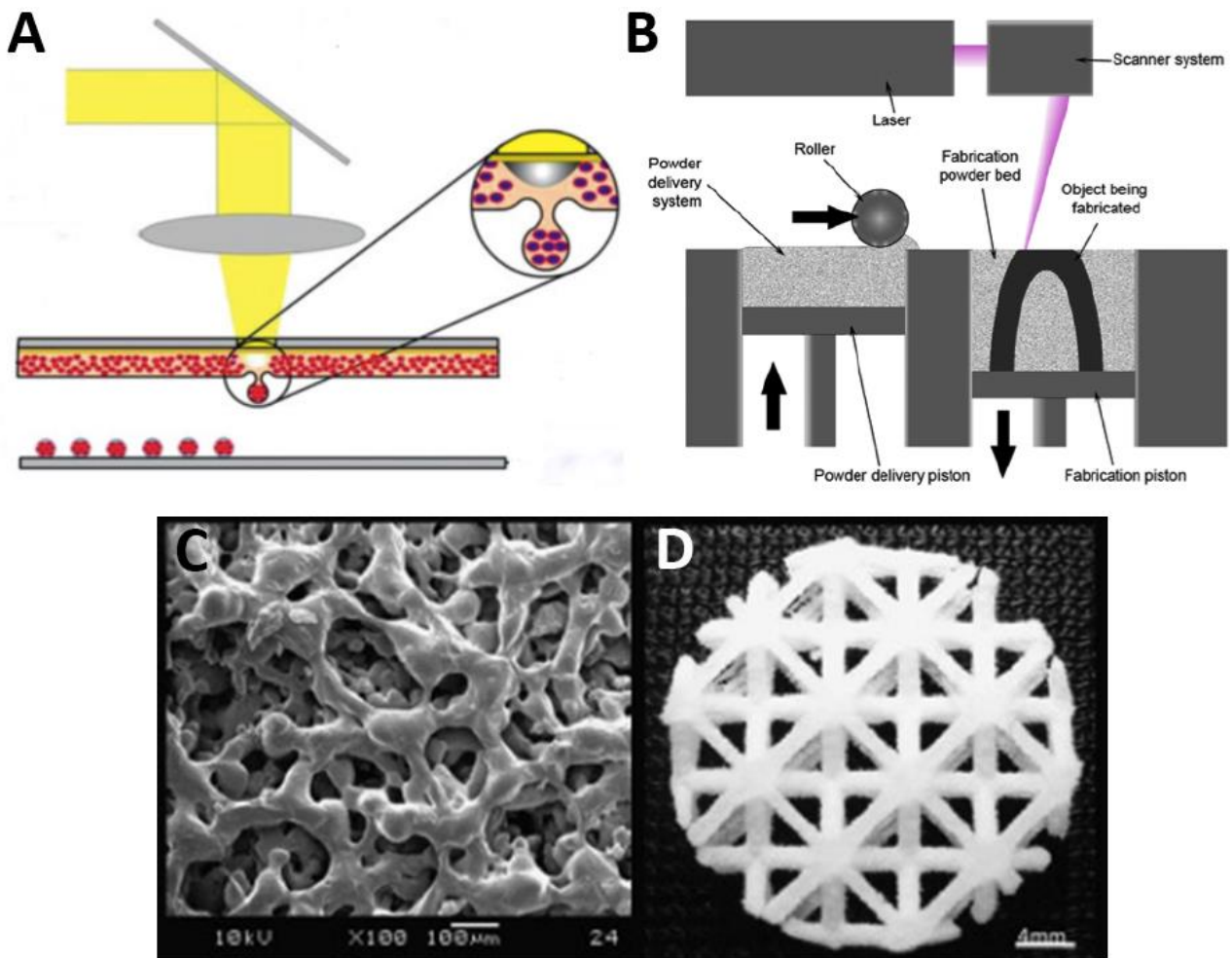


Figure 8 Schematic of laser assisted bioprinting (LaB) and selective laser melting systems (A) LaB offers the possibility of printing patterns with a high spatial resolution from a wide range of materials in the solid or liquid state. Here, a laser pulse is focused on a thin film of the bio-ink. A small fraction of the film is transferred to a receptor substrate that is placed parallel to the film-support system, a few microns away. (B) **Selective laser melting systems** employ a high power laser to sinter layers of material in powder form, in order to build 3D structures in a sequential manner. (C,D) High and low magnification SEM images of a poly- ϵ -caprolactone scaffolds made using SLS for cardiac regeneration. Modified from Yeong et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[212]

SLA employs a UV laser to polymerize UV-curable liquid resin precursors^[213] layer by layer^[214] with either commercially available or custom-made apparatuses,^[214, 215] using UV-curable derivatives of

poly(propylene fumarate),^[216] polylactide,^[217] poly- ϵ -caprolactone,^[218] etc.^[219] and it has been used to prepare soft tissue scaffolds for aortic valves,^[220] microvascular networks,^[221] and trachea.^[222] Current limitations of SLA are the resolution and availability of materials which are photostructurable, biocompatible and biodegradable, which are areas for future research.

Interestingly, Direct Laser Writing (DLW) by Multi-Photon Polymerization (MPP), as depicted in **Figure 9A**, allows the construction of structures with sub-100 nm resolution,^[197, 223] albeit at the expense of writing speed which has limited the size of the constructs prepared by DLW to small scale cell studies, as opposed to whole organ printing.^[195] A variety of materials can be employed to make hard, soft and even composite materials,^[224] including polymers and proteins as pioneered by Campagnola and *et al.* with bovine serum albumin (BSA), fibrogen, fibronectin, and collagen.^[225] Subsequently structures have been printed using biopolymers such as gelatin^[226] and hyaluronic acid,^[227] or synthetic polymers polycaprolactone,^[228] or polylactide (**Figure 9B**).^[229, 230] Moreover, it is possible to use DLW/MLP to print within another structure, as exemplified by printing proteins inside a hydrogel for neural cell guidance,^[231] and excitingly to encapsulate a live *C-elegans* worm in a protein-based hydrogel.^[232]

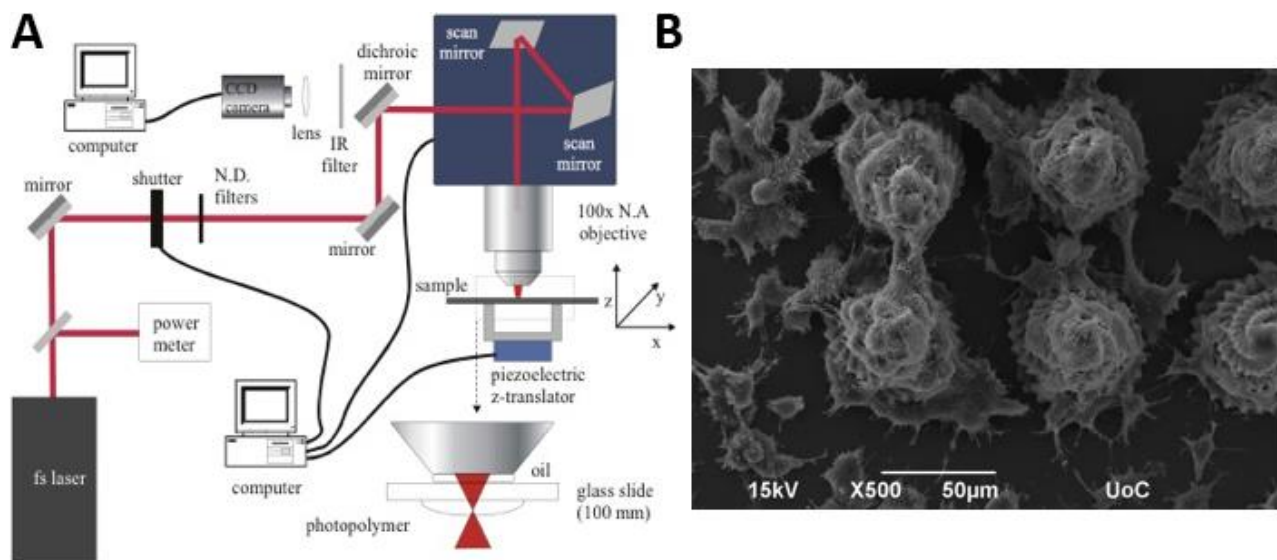


Figure 9 Direct Laser Writing by Multiphoton Polymerization (A) Scaffolds or device morphology is delineated via computer aided design software. These designs are transferred into command signals to control a beam of a sub-picosecond length pulse laser is focused inside the volume of a transparent photosensitive material, causing it to absorb two or more photons and polymerize locally. (B) PC-12 pheochromocytoma cells growing on polylactide structures fabricated via direct laser writing by multiphoton polymerization. Modified from Melissinaki *et al.* and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[229]

In order to achieve sub-100 nm spatial resolution, different patterning approaches have been employed in recent years.^[233] Electron beam (e-beam) lithography^[234] has been for example used for patterning proteins^[235] and DNA^[236] with high fidelity. E-beam uses high-energy (typically several tens of keV) electrons to ablate an electron-sensitive substrate (commonly known as a

resist), depicted in **Figure 10A**, with a resolution down to the sub-5 nm regime, **Figure 10B**. This versatile technique has been used to generate nanoscale patterns of a functional supramolecular “host” templates composed of diaminotriazine-functionalized polystyrene upon which thymine-functionalized CdSe-ZnS QDs assemble via complementary hydrogen-bonding interactions (**Figure 11**),^[237] and other studies have focused on cell-substrate interactions that determine contact guidance,^[238] adhesion^[239] and differential cell behaviour^[240] in response to the substrates.

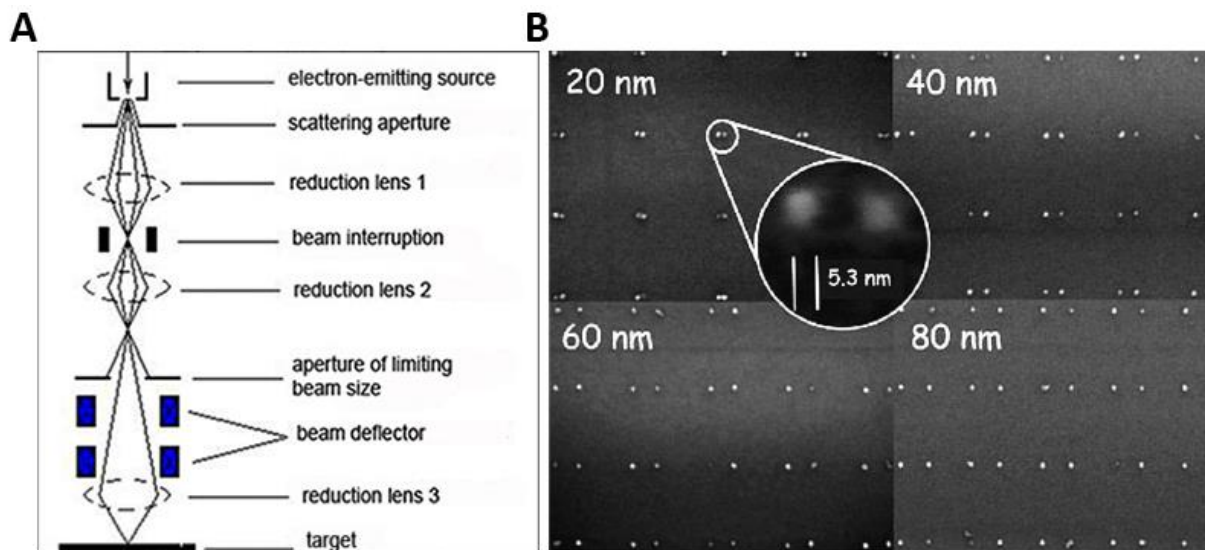


Figure 10. An overview of the Electron-beam system and system resolutions. (A) Electron beam column optics showing the main column and deflection components. (B) Pairs of HSQ nanodots at different inter-pair spacings (indicated in each panel). The dots are ~ 5 nm. Modified from Melissinaki et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[241]

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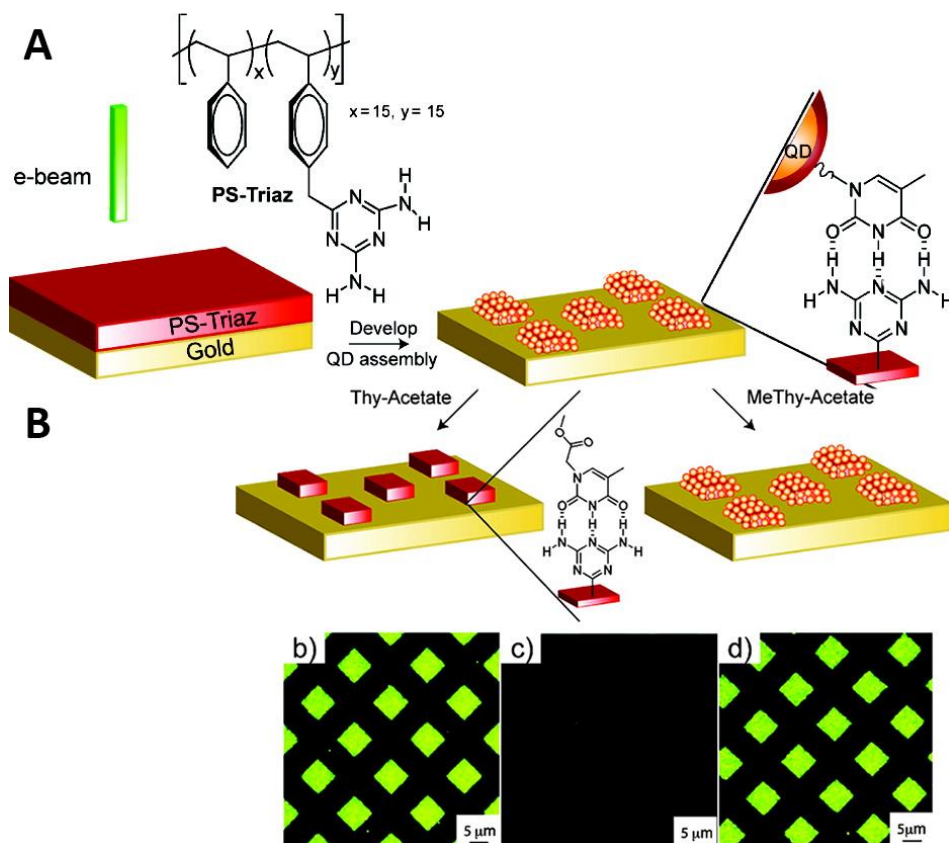


Figure 11 Electron-beam assisted fabrication of functional supramolecular arrays of thymine functionalised quantum dots. (A) Creation of nanopatterned PS-Triaz templates using Electron-beam lithography and functionalization of these features using the complementary Thy-QDs. (B) A “lock and key” disassembly of Thy-QDs using thymine acetate methyl ester with an N-methyl thymine acetate methyl ester control. (b) Fluorescent image of patterns after the assembly of Thy-QDs. (c) Fluorescent image after incubation in thymine acetate solution, showing the complete erasure of fluorescence. (d) Fluorescent image of after incubation in N-methylated thymine acetate solution showing no visible change in fluorescence. Modified from Subramani et al. and reproduced with permission of the publisher.^[237]

In addition to the aforementioned approaches, nano- and micro-imprint lithography have been key technologies for investigating the role of topographical information on cell-substrate interactions. E-beam generated structures can be reliably transferred into biological and polymeric materials through imprint lithography which can be employed as a high-throughput technique for patterning of proteins^[242], peptides^[243], and synthetic polymers^[240] with high fidelity.

Imprinted arrays of topographical and biochemical patterns have been utilized extensively in vitro to modulate the phenotype^[244] of primary cells and to enhance differentiation of stem cells towards osteogenic,^[245] neurogenic,^[246] adipogenic^[247] and myogenic^[248] lineages. Indeed, arrays of RGD-functionalized sub-10 nm metal dots were employed to study the role of the geometric organization of extracellular matrix (ECM) binding ligands on the adhesion and spreading of fibroblasts, identifying a minimum cell spreading adhesive unit that involves the clustering of at least 4 integrins within ~60 nm.^[249] Interestingly, stem cells have been shown to maintain their stem cell markers on patterned substrates for up to eight weeks in vitro culture without

1 phonotypic drift,^[240] and even when cells were cultured in osteodifferentiation media only modest
2 levels of osteogenic markers were noted.

3 Although both lithographic and additive manufacturing techniques have generated an abundance
4 of interesting studies performed *in vitro*, these technologies have yet to be effectively translated
5 into clinical advances, and the concept of controlled morphological and topographical
6 modification in tissue engineering has not produced compelling data to date in preclinical studies.
7 However, we believe 3D printing technologies represent the future of manufacturing patient-
8 specific biomaterials for drug delivery and tissue engineering;^[192, 250] and moreover that
9 components produced by the field of synthetic biology (e.g. engineered proteins, DNA, polymer-
10 biomolecule hybrids) will play an increasingly large role as the building blocks of drug delivery
11 devices and tissue scaffolds in the (near) future. ^[110, 251]

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